

**A STUDY ON NEEDS OF PARENTS WITH CHILDREN WITH HEARING-
IMPAIRMENT
İN TRANSİTİON TO KİNDERGARTEN İN TURKEY**

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This study investigated the information needs of parents who have children in transition into public kindergarten. The research group consisted of 94 parents who have children with hearing impairment with ages ranging from 3 to 5. "The Scale Parental Information Needs in Transition to Kindergarten" was used in this study. Parents responses to the items of the questionnaires were determined by the means and percentages. The research also examined the effects of different variables. These variables were the age at which children began education, age and educational level of parents. The data was analyzed by Kruskall Wallis H Test. The results in this study show that parents have information needs in all items of the scale.

There are many different transition periods in the lives of young children. All children experience such transitions as starting to walk, going to school, entering adolescence. Children with hearing impairment experience many transitions similar to those of their typically-developing peers in addition to their own unique ones. Such events as the diagnosis of a disability, starting a treatment or special education, decision of placement, entrance into adolescence or adulthood are very stressful and difficult for many families (Hanline, 1988).

Getting used to new circumstances, accepting new duties, communicating with strangers are situations difficult for the families to cope with (Hanline & Halvorsen, 1989; Spiegel-McGill, Reed, Konig & McGowan, 1990). Insufficiency of information about the new program, worries about the physical safety of children and attitudes of other individuals, expectations of failure, and suspicions about the choice of the educational environment are among the difficulties experienced by the families before the transition.(Hanline & Halvorsen, 1989).

The families may reduce their level of anxiety and stress during the transition period by preparing for the transition, enabling their children to prepare independently for other transitions in their lives, by participating actively in the transition process (Spiegel-McGill et al., 1990; Fowler, Schwartz & Atwater, 1991). Parents can provide a facilitating role in transition process by giving

information about themselves and their children, helping their children to adapt to changes and learn skills required by the new program, and by participating in the placement decisions, planning and execution of transition as a member of the transition team (McNair & Rush, 1991; Fowler et al., 1991).

Active participation of parents can be provided by preparing transition plans, taking into consideration the parents' individual needs about the transition process (Spiegel-McGill et al., 1990). Equipping parents with the necessary knowledge and skills determined by their special needs enables the families to experience less stress during the transition period (Hanline & Halvorsen, 1989; Fowler et al., 1991). Parents found it helpful to participate in a transition program and to have individual support. It is generally accepted that the coherence between school and home is supported by considering the needs of parents as well as the needs of children and specialists during both the transition and application phase of transition (Snellman, Smith & Rotatori, 1994). Sufficiently prepared parents and children often experience a successful transition period (Rous, Hemmeter & Schuster, 1994).

For the preschool to school transition, parents can be prepared by being given information about the period and available support services. For many parents, the period of transition to a new school starts with evaluation of the skills of their children. For this reason, parents should first be given information about the evaluation processes and the interpretation of the results. Parents may experience less anxiety when they are given information about the activities to prepare children for a kindergarten (Bagley, 1995). Other school or program choices available for the children, their legal rights in the transition period (Rous et al., 1994); developmental characteristics of preschoolers (Waxler, Thomson & Poblete, 1990), their children's needs, roles of educators and parents in this process (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 1999), kindergarten curriculum and timetable, kindergarten rules and expectations (Meier & Schafran, 1999) are among the other topics of information provided to the families.

Other means of support include visiting and observing the kindergarten class, and holding conferences with the teacher and the school administrators (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 1999; Bagley, 1995). When observation is not possible, it may be helpful to consult with families who have had the kindergarten experience. When sufficient information is not provided, consulting a specialist outside the school may also enable the parents to prepare themselves and their children for the transition and help them make the most appropriate choice (Bagley, 1995).

Edson (1994) indicated that kindergarten is the first step to elementary education, and that is the reason why parents ask many questions about kindergarten education. How will the kindergarten meet their children's needs? What are the differences and similarities between kindergarten and preschool? How will reading and math be handled in kindergarten? What will the activities be during day? Meier and Schafran (1999) indicated that parents need information about enrollment to a kindergarten (such as enrollment date, etc.) available schools, and how to establish contact with the schools.

Research on parents' needs in the transition process reveal that parents desire to participate in the transition process and may require the support of specialists during the process. They also may need information about the program (Hanline & Halvorsen, 1989), how to acquire and use effective communication skills, and how to garner support during the selection of program and services. (Spiegel-McGill et al., 1990). Results from a study (Hanline, 1988) on the needs of parents of children with special needs who have just completed transition to special classes in

public preschools, revealed that families mostly required information about the relevant services. The same study also revealed that families found it important to get information about placement procedures and IEP development. The study determined that the most needed services by the parents were written information about the available kindergartens for transition in their neighborhood and a specialist who could provide information about the services available for their children. Meeting the various needs of parents in the transition period plays an important role in the successful transition of the children

In Turkey, following diagnosis children with disabilities, go through a series of educational levels such as early education, preschool and primary and are faced with decisions about transition at each level. There is not a comprehensive program that prepares the families and the students with special needs to transition process. The institutes which provide education at the preschool stage to children with hearing impairments are mostly private education institutes. The main intentions of these institutes are to provide the child with hearing problem with the verbal communication skill. The expenses for this training are covered by the state and thus, particularly in metropolitan areas large numbers of the students with hearing difficulty are taking benefit of this education. Although numbers of the private educational establishments dealing with education of the children with hearing impairments at preschool level and the institutes providing normal merging education increase, the education provided by these institutes are not included in obligatory education. The children with hearing difficulties start at the same level with other normal children of the same age the kindergarten program which is the first step of formal education there is not any program that prepares the children with hearing impediments and their families to transition process. Consequently, kindergarten training and elementary education result with failure for many children having special needs and their families.

The basic reason for the problems in application of the transition process appears to be the lack of a definition regarding this transition process in legal arrangement.

The most comprehensive legislation in Turkey about the children with disabilities is the special education law, 573 which was prepared and accepted in 1997. Under this law many articles from prognosis of the children with impairments to early training, family training and merging education are covered; however, there is not any definition with regard to transition process. The articles of this law indicate similarities with the public law 94-142 of United States of America about disabled children from many aspects.

Along with the lack of legal arrangement, there is not a study completed up to time in Turkey about how to prepare the students with disabilities to transition process and to determine what the roles and requirements of the families in this period. The studies expressed above are the works included in international literature. For this reason this study bears the characteristics of the first and only study conducted in Turkey on this subject. The aim of the study is the determine the requirements of the families having children with impediments in transition to kindergarten program. The study also aimed to determine whether such factors as parental age, educational status and the age of the child when education started had a significant impact on those needs. It is also considered that results of this study shall guide the establishments conducting studies with the children at preschool level about the requirements of parents in preparation to kindergarten class and what should be done to meet these requirements.

Method

Participants

The participants were 94 hearing parents of hearing-impaired preschoolers between the ages of 3 and 5 years.

The children of the parents participated in the study had hearing losses at advanced and very advanced levels and they had no other disabilities. In the study 132 parents whose children were attending private educational institutes to take hearing and speaking training have been contacted and, 94 of these parents have been included into the study group for they have filled the investigation tool (form) as complete.

Table 1
Personal Characteristics of Parents

Variable	Level	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
<i>Age of mothers</i>	25 years and younger	26	27.7
	26-30 years	40	42.6
	31-35 years	20	21.3
	36 years and over	8	8.5
	TOTAL	94	100.00
<i>Educational status of mothers</i>	Primary School	45	48.9
	Secondary School	12	13.0
	High School	29	31.5
	Higher Education	6	6.5
	TOTAL	92	100.00
<i>Occupation of mothers</i>	House wife	77	82.8
	Medical Doctor	2	2.2
	Teacher	5	5.4
	Secretary	2	2.2
	Officer	4	4.3
	Nurse	1	1.1
	Cleaner	1	1.1
	Architect	1	1.1
	TOTAL	93	100.00
<i>Age of fathers</i>	25 years and younger	7	7.6
	26-30 years	36	39.1
	31-35 years	32	34.8
	36 years and over	17	18.5
	TOTAL	92	100.00
<i>Educational status of fathers</i>	Primary School	19	20.7
	Secondary School	18	19.6
	High School	46	50.0
	Higher Education	9	9.8
	TOTAL	92	100.00
<i>Occupational status of fathers</i>	Worker	20	14.3
	Officer	33	33.0
	Carpenter	4	3.3
	Self-employed	23	16.5
	Driver	6	6.6
	Architect	1	1.1
	Engineer	1	1.1
	Electricity Technician	2	2.2
	Town Planning	1	1.1
	TOTAL	91	100.00

As it is seen from the Table 1, majority of the mothers were in the ages between 26 and 30 (42%), and mostly had elementary school education (48.9%). Ages of the fathers varied from 31 to 35 years (34.8%). A look at the educational levels of the father, in the table shows that half of them were generally high school graduates (50%). While the significant majority of the mothers (82.8%) were housewives, it is seen that the occupation of the fathers varied.

Characteristics of hearing impaired children are presented in Table 2. According to Table 2, it can be claimed that the distribution of the children between both genders are similar. When we take a look at the ages of the children it is clearly seen that the number of children in 5-6 age group is a little higher (40.9%) compared to the other age groups. In addition the majority of the children consisted of the ones diagnosed after 3 years of age.

Table 2
Characteristics of the Children

Variable	Level	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex of children	Female	43	46.2
	Male	50	53.8
	TOTAL	93	100.00
Age of Children	3 years	25	26.9
	4 years	30	32.3
	5-6 years	38	40.9
	TOTAL	93	100.00
Age at which Children Started Education	1-2 years (0-1,11 months)	25	27.5
	2-3 years (2-2,11 months)	27	29.7
	3 years and over	39	42.9
	TOTAL	91	100.00

Material

An information form was used to gather data about *age of mothers and fathers, educational status of fathers and mothers, occupational status of mothers and fathers, age of children, sex of children, age at which children started education*.

The Scale for Parental Needs in Transition to Kindergarten was developed by the researchers to determine the parents' information needs for their children's transition to kindergarten. The Likert scale consists of 24 statements and has three response alternatives to each statement: *Yes, Not Sure* and *No*. During development of the scale, the researchers reviewed the literature to examine the measurement scales devised for similar purposes and studies designed to determine needs. In addition, clinical experiences of the researchers helped in preparing the statement pool.

Validity

Construct Validity

The factor analysis was performed to determine structural validity of the scale.

Factor Analysis

The Basic Components Analysis was applied to the collected responses in order to determine basic dimensions and factorial structure of the Scale for Parental Need in Transition to Kindergarten. It was seen that items in the Scale were combined in one dimension and provide explanation for 48% of the total variance. As a result of factor analysis, it was found that factor loadings of items were between .46 to .83. It was decided the Scale would consist of 24 items; these factor loadings are given in Table 3.

Reliability

Internal Consistency

Total correlation of items were calculated to determine internal consistency of the Scale. It was found that total item correlation of 24 items in the Scale were greater than .45. Total correlation of items are given in Table 3. In addition, an alpha-coefficient was calculated to determine inner consistency of the Scale, and alpha value for the scale was determined to be .95.

Table 3*The Results of Factor Analysis and Item Analysis for the Scale of Parental Needs in Transition to Kindergarten*

Article	Factor loadings	Item-Total Correlation
1. I need information regarding how well the kindergarten will meet the needs of my child.	0.71	0.67
2. I need information on the developmental characteristics of other children at age of kindergarten.	0.70	0.66
3. I need to know what my child will be taught.	0.69	0.65
4. I want to know if my child's developmental level and skill are appropriate for kindergarten.	0.71	0.68
5. I need information about the similarities and differences between kindergarten and preschool.	0.63	0.59
6. I need information on the rules that my child and I should observe.	0.76	0.72
7. I need to know what the kindergarten teacher and administrators would expect from me and my child.	0.66	0.63
8. I need information about where my child could be evaluated to determine if s/he will attend kindergarten.	0.68	0.65
9. I need information about kindergartens that my child can attend.	0.49	0.46
10. I need to know how I can establish contact with kindergartens available for my child and visit them to observe.	0.46	0.43
11. I need information about what I should be watching for during my observation to choose the kindergarten for my child.	0.83	0.80
12. I need to know how I can help my child to get him/her ready for kindergarten.	0.78	0.74
13. I need to know what information I should provide to kindergarten administration during my child's enrollment.	0.66	0.63
14. I need information about my legal rights regarding my child's acceptance to kindergarten	0.51	0.49
15. I need information about places that I could apply in case that my child would not be accepted by kindergarten.	0.77	0.45
16. I need to know how I can inform the kindergarten teacher about the disability and characteristics of my child.	0.77	0.73
17. I need to know how I can communicate my expectations from him/her. to the kindergarten teacher	0.78	0.75
18. I need know what I should do to introduce my child to the other children in the class.	0.71	0.67
19. I need to know what I should do to provide a cooperation between the special education teacher and kindergarten teacher.	0.82	0.79
20. I need to know if my child would need special education while she is attending a kindergarten.	0.79	0.75
21. I need to know how I can give information about my child to other parents.	0.73	0.69
22. I need to know how I can meet with parents with similar circumstances to share our experiences.	0.75	0.72
23. I need to know how I can solve my child's problems in cooperation with the kindergarten teachers.	0.72	0.69
24. I need information about the persons and places in or out of school from which I can get information when my child experiences a problem	0.69	0.65
Variance explained by single factor = 48,19%		
Alpha = 0,95		
Spearman-Brown Split-Half Test Correlation = 0,93		

Split-half Test

Reliability of the Scale was evaluated with Spearman-Brown Split-Half Test Correlation, and split-half reliability coefficient was found to be .93.

Results of reliability and validity tests suggest that the psychometric properties of the Scale are sufficient to support its use to determine parental needs in transition to kindergarten in Turkey.

Data Analysis

Parental responses to the statements of the *Scale of Parental Needs in Transition to Kindergarten* were analyzed by using arithmetical means and percentages. Furthermore, Kruskal-Wallis H Test was used to determine if the level of parental needs changed according to the age the child started education, age and educational levels of parents.

Results***Parental Needs in Transition to Kindergarten***

Arithmetical means and percentile values of the collected data were analyzed to determine the parental needs in transition to kindergarten. Table 4 shows the rates and percentile values of the needs expressed by parents.

As shown by the data in Table 4, the parents expressed needs for all indicated items for the transition to kindergarten. As seen in Table 4, for the responses to items, the top percentage level was 83.3% and bottom level was 60.6%. Thus, it is possible to suggest that parents need information about all areas for their children's transition to kindergarten. The item for which parents expressed the highest need level at 88.3% was the item of *I need information about my legal rights regarding my child's acceptance to kindergarten*. This item is followed by the item of *I need information about the persons and places in or out of school from which I can get information when my child experiences a problem* with a level of 84.0%. The parents selected the item *I need information about how I can inform other parents* at the lowest percentage of 60.6%. These findings are similar to a research performed by Hanline (1988) for purposes similar to those in this study. Hanline (1988) investigated the needs of parents of 92 children with special needs who are in transition or have just completed transition to public school special classrooms, and concluded that parents need information about relevant services and legal arrangements.

Consideration of Parental Needs in Transition with Respect to Various Variables

Various variables that may have an effect on parental needs in transition to kindergarten were considered. The variables were determined according to the age children started education, and to age and educational status of parents.

As it can be seen from Table 5, an analysis is made based on Kruskal Wallis H test whether the age at which the education of the children starts, ages and educational status of the parents, who had children with hearing disability had caused a significant difference about the requirements of the parents in transition process to kindergarten. According to the analysis conducted, it is noticed only that the paternal age had caused a significant difference on the requirements while other variables had not caused a significant difference.

When the age groups were examined for this significant difference, it was seen that there was a significant difference between age groups of 26-30 and 31-35. Thus, it could be suggested that the need level of fathers in 26-30 age group was higher than the need level of fathers in 30-35 age group.

Table 4

Item Mean Scores and Distribution of Responses According to Choices for the Scale of Parental Needs in Transition to Kindergarten (N= 94)

Item	M	Yes n %	Not sure n %	No n %
1. I need information regarding how well the kindergarten will meet the needs of my child.	2.66	74 78.7	8 8.5	12 12.8
2. I need information on the developmental characteristics of other children at age of kindergarten.	2.53	71 75.5	2 2.1	21 22.3
3. I need to know what my child will be taught.	2.59	71 75.5	7 7.4	16 17.0
4. I want to know if my child's developmental level and skill are appropriate for kindergarten.	2.56	71 75.5	5 5.3	18 19.1
5. I need information about the similarities and differences between kindergarten and preschool.	2.71	76 80.9	9 9.6	9 9.6
6. I need information on the rules that my child and I should observe.	2.62	74 78.7	4 4.3	16 17.0
7. I need to know what the kindergarten teacher and administrators would expect from me and my child.	2.73	78 83.0	7 7.4	9 9.6
8. I need information about where my child could be evaluated to determine if s/he will attend kindergarten.	2.60	72 76.6	6 6.4	16 17.0
9. I need information about kindergartens that my child can attend.	2.68	77 81.9	4 4.3	13 13.8
10. I need to know how I can establish contact with kindergartens available for my child and visit them to observe.	2.66	74 78.7	8 8.5	12 12.8
11. I need information about what I should be watching for during my observation to choose the kindergarten for my child.	2.62	73 77.7	6 6.4	15 16.0
12. I need to know how I can help my child to get him/her ready for kindergarten.	2.63	73 77.7	7 7.4	14 14.9
13. I need to know what information I should provide to kindergarten administration during my child's enrollment.	2.48	66 70.2	7 7.4	21 22.3
14. I need information about my legal rights regarding my child's acceptance to kindergarten.	2.83	83 88.3	6 6.4	5 5.3
15. I need information about places that I could apply in case that my child would not be accepted by kindergarten.	2.73	77 81.9	9 9.6	8 8.5
16. I need to know how I can inform the kindergarten teacher about the disability and characteristics of my child.	2.44	63 67.0	9 9.6	22 23.4
17. I need to know how I can communicate my expectations from him/her to the kindergarten teacher.	2.52	67 71.3	9 9.6	18 19.1
18. I need to know what I should do to introduce my child to the other children in the class.	2.56	68 72.3	11 11.7	15 16.0
19. I need to know what I should do to provide a cooperation between the special education teacher and kindergarten teacher.	2.61	72 76.6	7 7.4	15 16.0
20. I need to know if my child would need special education while she is attending a kindergarten.	2.48	66 70.2	7 7.4	21 22.3
21. I need to know how I can give information about my child to other parents.	2.34	57 60.6	12 12.8	25 26.6
22. I need to know how I can meet with parents with similar circumstances to share our experiences.	2.51	66 70.2	10 10.6	18 19.1
23. I need to know how I can solve my child's problems in cooperation with the kindergarten teachers.	2.70	76 80.9	8 8.5	10 10.6
24. I need information about the persons and places in or out of school from which I can get information when my child experiences a problem	2.76	79 84.0	7 7.4	8 8.5

Table 5
Comparison of Parental Need Levels for the Age of Fathers (Kruskal-Wallis H Test)

<i>Age the Child Started Education</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	χ^2	<i>P</i>
2 years and younger (0-1,11 months)	25	61.68	40.88	4.74	0.09
2-3 years (2-2,11 months)	27	59.30	40.81		
3 years and older	39	65.62	52.87		
<i>Educational status of Mothers</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	χ^2	<i>P</i>
Primary	45	62.80	43.39	1.06	0.79
Secondary	12	62.75	54.97		
High school	29	62.00	44.76		
Higher	6	62.67	45.00		
<i>Educational status of Fathers</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	χ^2	<i>P</i>
Primary	19	62.53	43.39	2.35	0.50
Secondary	18	64.72	54.97		
High school	46	61.76	44.76		
Higher	9	60.56	45.00		
<i>Age of Mothers</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	χ^2	<i>P</i>
25 years and younger	26	64.12	52.42	6.82	0.08
26-30 years	40	63.98	51.53		
30-35 years	20	62.10	40.30		
36 years and older	8	51.38	29.38		
<i>Age of Fathers</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	χ^2	<i>P</i>
25 years and younger	7	67.43	53.29	10.61	0.01
26-30 years	36	65.39	56.00		
30-35 years	32	58.50	35.77		
36 years and older	17	61.23	43.79		

Discussion

This study was designed to examine the needs of parents of preschoolers in transition to kindergarten in Turkey. Transition to kindergarten is very important process for entering formal school life for all families and their children with hearing impairment. Despite of this fact, there is little consideration to determine these needs before transition to kindergarten in Turkey. To make some arrangements in this process, parental needs about placement alternatives and legal rights have to be determined. Because of this, this study aimed to research parental information needs about the transition to kindergarten in Turkey. Results of this study indicated that most of the parents (between percentages of 88.3% to 60.6%) needed information in all areas for transition to kindergarten. This result could be explained by the fact that the focus of education by the programs on children with disabilities in Turkey is narrowly on the education of children, which leads to adopting an approach targeting the correction of the disability. Thus the other needs of children with disabilities and their parents are ignored, especially in preschool age. This result indicated that parental information needs should be determined for successful transition process in Turkey.

Although the importance of determining parental needs in transition, there is no research in this field in Turkey. There are some research about needs of parents who have children with special

needs in preschool age (Akçamete & Kargin, 1996; Sucuoglu, 1995). The results of these studies indicated that parents needed previously information. In these studies information needs consisted of how to play, how to speak with their children and how to manage their child's behavior. Parents

also needed information about their child's disability and teaching some skills to their child. These results showed that in Turkey, parent education programs should be prepared to meet information needs of parents and also parents should be informed in transition process.

The findings of this study are supported by some professionals from other countries in the literature. Fowler et al. (1991), indicated that the parents need information on such issues as determining the skills required by kindergarten education and teaching such skills to children, and they suggested that active participation of parents must be encouraged

In another report, Rous et.al., (1994) stated that parents needed to know educational possibilities available for their children and their legal rights in transition process. This statement supports the result of our study revealing that parents expressed the highest need level (88.3%) for the item of *I need information about my legal rights regarding my child's acceptance to kindergarten.*

In this study, various variables were also examined, which could have effects on parental needs during transition to kindergarten. The findings revealed that selected demographic variables, with the exception of the age of fathers, did not have a significant effect on the needs in transition process. When fathers' age was considered, the needs of younger fathers appeared to be higher. In addition, although there was no statistically significant difference between needs of mothers from different ages, it could be suggested that the needs of parents increased as the age decreased, when arithmetical means were considered. This trend could be explained by the fact that experiences of younger parents are more limited than the experiences of older parents. It is also possible to suggest that younger parents are more open to learn.

In summary the results of this study indicated that most of the parents needed information in all areas for transition to kindergarten. This parental information needs in transition show us that some arrangements in application is needed. Moreover, information in transition should be given to parents as a legal right in Turkey. In addition more research is needed to determine parental needs in all transition period.

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